

Gulf Cove United Methodist Church
Church Council Meeting
November 27, 2017 – 7:00pm

Attendees:

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| Doreen Alvarez (Church Council Chairman) | Jeanne Shrout Rick Starck |
| Pastor Mike Weaver Loretta Barche | Dana Hanson |

The meeting was opened with the lighting of the candle representing Jesus Christ, followed by a prayer by Doreen.

Corrections to Previous Minutes: The recording secretary was not notified of any necessary corrections to the minutes of the 10/23/2017 meeting.

EXPERIENCE. EMBRACE. ENGAGE.

Worship: Advent and Christmas plans are completed. We will have a Blue Christmas service on December 21 at 6:30pm. On Christmas Eve morning, we will have one 8:00am hymn-sing service, and a blended traditional-contemporary service at 10:00am. Later on Christmas Eve, we will have three candlelight services: 6:30pm family; 8:00pm traditional; and 11:30pm communion.

Pastor Mike said his first three sermons of the new year will involve integrating our new logo and our new Vision statement (Experience, Embrace, Engage). They will correlate into what our future can look like.

Many of Pastor Mike's sermons are put online. The number of people who view these videos generally count toward total attendance. For the viewing to count, a YouTube clip must be watched for 2 or 3 minutes; on Facebook it must be watched only around 30 seconds. There is a way to find out who is doing the viewing. Pastor Mike said if he knows that person attended worship on Sunday, he does not count it as a view. But if the person did not attend on Sunday, the viewing is counted.

Outreach: Don Teague informed the church yesterday that 605 dinners were served or delivered on Thanksgiving. Pastor Mike was happy to note that this year there seemed to be more participation from both youth and adults. Myakka River Elementary needs our assistance with serving food for their Christmas Family Day (December 9, 9:30-11:30am). The Boy Scouts Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser is later on December 9, from 4:00-8:00pm.

Team Cuba: Jeanne Shrout advised that Cuba was hit extremely hard by hurricane Irma, and Guantanamo has still not recovered from hurricane Matthew last year. Cuba issues only 50 building permits per year in each province. Our sister churches in Nicaro and Frank Pais are in neighboring provinces. We have people from GCUMC going to Cuba during January-February.

Finance & Expansion Plans: Doreen came upon an article by Ryan Lockett which reminded her of our own situation when it comes to building plans. It is reproduced at the end of these minutes. She was especially struck by a few sentences in the article which read:

The most successful church building projects are those which support a vibrant congregation that is “all onboard,” focused on the ultimate goal of serving God. In this respect buildings are always secondary to the Gospel mission. ... Many times we feel like we have failed as a church when we can’t raise all the funds for a visionary building plan in one capital campaign. We would do well to look at some of these older churches and realize that most of them were built in phases over multiple generations. ... Peter had the faith to step out of the boat, but he could not make it the full distance to Jesus. However, the beautiful thing about this story is that Jesus met Peter half-way and completed his mission.

Doreen said GCUMC has its financial struggles, but we always just make it – every time, with the help of Jesus. We need to take the leap of faith that Peter did when it comes to our building plans. Pastor Mike recommends we read When Not to Build by Ray Bowman and Eddy Hall. He also believes that GCUMC is on the right track – it’s not that we *want* to do something, but we *need* to do it. Doreen pointed out that we don’t have to do *anything*; our concern is and should be, what is *God* calling us to do.

Rick pointed out that our four portables were “old” when we got them from one of the area schools and are now in really bad shape and need to be replaced. He estimated that each is about 1,000 square feet. By using the empty space between them, we could erect a new building of 7,000 to 8,000 square feet, double that if we included a second floor. But we need to be aware of mortgage costs if any mortgage must be incurred. (For example, if we went all-out and had to borrow \$1M at 3.75% for 30 years, our monthly payment would be around \$4,630. Over the life of the loan, we would pay \$667,216 in interest. Nobody likes this scenario.)

The problem we face is that we can’t meet our current expenses of \$8,000 to \$9,000 a week (which does not include any mortgage payment) without pulling from the Reserve Fund over the summer and/or fall months. The rest of the year we “just” get by, sometimes with a little to carry over to the next month. We **MUST** have a plan for payment before we go forward.

One way to do it is to raise slowly all the capital we need. The new structure could be built over many years as mentioned in the below article by Ryan Lockett. This is the way Fellowship Church in Rotonda was built without incurring a mortgage. Although we don’t know exactly how Englewood UMC was built, it now has several buildings which are connected by covered walkways.

Jeanne mentioned that, if just half of our congregation tithed, we would meet our yearly budget. Tithing is meant to cover the budget (church operating expenses plus many established ministries). Anything over that is usually given toward a specific need, such as the Angel Tree, Habitat houses, audio-visual equipment replacement, etc. When compared to other churches, our budget is below what many similarly-sized churches have. When it comes to attendance, Pastor Mike said that more recently, most growth comes from new members -- a person new to the faith is so excited that he/she brings in more new members than a person who is a long-time Christian.

Rick said one thing we still don’t address in our budget is setting aside money for many items that we *know* will eventually need to be replaced – the van, the roof, rotting columns, the portables, etc. We do set aside some amounts faithfully each month: \$200 for A/C, \$360 for

church property taxes, \$100 for parsonage & Oaks Cove property taxes, and \$30 for pastoral changes. If there is a sufficient excess, amounts are also set aside for facilities expansion and facilities upkeep. It was suggested we notify the congregation of specific items which need to be replaced.

We need to establish a Campus Expansion Committee and/or Growth Committee to address these concerns. "Campus expansion" leads one to think about structures and maintenance, but "Growth" addresses both structures and congregation. If our congregation increased, there would be an increase in donations. It seems the best way is to address everything is in tiers, by prioritizing what needs to be done first. Results of previous Building Committees should also be reviewed in depth. Whatever is decided, it should fit the community and what we are doing as a church. This should be our WIG – our Wildly Important Goal – for the immediate future.

Our sanctuary is used for events, which requires tearing down the seating and putting it back up, and a dedicated sanctuary would be nice. However, we have a greater need right now for meeting rooms. Our relationship with the community is growing. Outside organizations which currently use our facilities include the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, a Neighborhood Watch group, Charlotte County Health Department, AA, and Al-Anon.

The possibility of converting our library to a meeting room was briefly discussed. The most realistic result would be to remove most of the books and media materials, while retaining a limited number of reference materials, thereby increasing the seating capacity.

Doreen said it looks like the most immediate, important need for 2018 is to establish a Campus Expansion or Growth Committee which is active and involved, and which truly seeks to ascertain what we need. Once the committee reaches its conclusions, its recommendations should be presented to the congregation. Their plan must address how we increase our capital (capital campaign, pledges, etc.) and what do we do to get it going. The Trustees must be involved.

There are organizations which grant money to non-profits based on their community need. We used to be a candidate under the Venice Foundation. (This organization may have evolved into the Gulf Coast Community Foundation; see <https://www.gulfcoastcf.org/>.) It was noted that Englewood Helping Hand has participated in a one-day, online fundraising event which was advertised in our church. For the 2016 drive, we advised the congregation as follows:

EHH Giving Partner Challenge ~ Heads up! Donate to Englewood Helping Hand (or other specified charity) ONLINE at www.givingpartnerchallenge.org, starting at NOON on Tuesday September 20 thru NOON on Wednesday September 21. During this 24-hour period, the Patterson Foundation will match every \$100-max-donation from a new donor 2-for-1. You donate \$100, EHH receives \$300. It will match 1-for-1 from a donor who previously gave thru the Giving Partner Challenge. [See also, <http://thegivingpartner.guidestar.org/>.]

The possibility of starting a child-care program of some sort was discussed again. If it was a "before" or "after" school activity, we would likely be required to provide transportation to/from area schools. Envisioned is a program that is not a pre-school per se, but involves structured play and limited educational activities (such as reading), or a "mom's day out." There would be

set days and hours that it would be available. This type of activity would not have the room-size prerequisites that a pre-school does. More importantly, this activity would not only help the community, but could also be a fundraiser. Of necessity, the room would have to be able to change quickly into another seating format that the church can use.

Trustees: Rick Starck advised that, because of our limited finances, the Trustees try to address safety concerns first, and repairs second. They plan to put down a sandy-type, non-slip paint on the portable walkways; the adhesive strips we have been using do not last long in our Florida weather. Many of the fluorescent lights have been replaced with LEDs. It was suggested that a push be made to clean up the wood and other items that are around the A/V booth and/or in the chapel. Although there are a lot of stained ceiling tiles, especially in the Narthex area, it is not a safety issue at this point.

Our internet needs to be strengthened. Dawn Tesauro and Rick have held conversations about switching to Comcast; they provide a much faster internet transmit time than does CenturyLink. The Trustees will be looking into this problem in the near future.

SPR: With regard to personnel, Rick asked who are we looking for next within the church? A short discussion involved a Director of Christian Education, who would organize and monitor, but not necessarily take care of day-to-day operations. One task could be to establish programs on various topics that would be of interest to the community. If the child-care program was started, part-time employees might be necessary.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

All-Pro Dads at Myakka: Pastor Mike advised that a meeting will be held shortly to finalize this program.

Adam Hamilton Advent Study: Two sessions of this 5-week class are starting on Wednesday, November 29: one at noon in Room 109, and the other at 6:15pm in #201. Books are provided.

Journey in Faith Bible Study: Pastor Becky Stephenson is conducting these sessions on Tuesdays for 10 weeks, starting November 28. Child care is available.

AmazonSmile: Congregation members can help GCUMC all year by shopping at <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-2450154>. AmazonSmile is the same as Amazon -- same products, same prices, same Amazon Prime benefits. However, when we use AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of eligible purchases to GCUMC.

ADJOURNING

This is Doreen's last meeting as Church Council Chairwoman. She thanked us for a fabulous three years of patience and for giving her the learning curve she felt she needed. She was thanked by us for her never-ending leadership – especially the last 1½ years after she moved to the far side of Punta Gorda. *Thank you, Doreen, for your dedication!*

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm with a prayer by Pastor Mike. Church Council will not hold a December meeting. Their next meeting will be on Monday, January 22, 2018, at 7:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Hanson
Recording Secretary

From the Wesley Brothers Website at:

<http://www.wesleybros.com/wesbros/guest-artist-ryan-lockett/>

²⁹ Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:29-31)

Whenever I have the privilege to travel to an unfamiliar city, I like to explore the older parts of town and visit any gothic church buildings I can find there. While the cathedrals are always impressive with their carved stone vaults of marble and limestone, my favorite buildings are usually the smaller parish churches. Many of these beautiful old buildings feature timber roofs, fashioned with curved wooden arches, that resemble the hull of a boat. This is not by accident. From Noah's Arc and Jonah's whale to the fisher-disciples of Galilee and the shipwrecked apostle Paul, the Bible is full of stories set on a boat at sea in frightening conditions. Indeed, Christian life is often described in terms of following Christ on an uncertain journey in which we may be tossed about on the waters.

In this context it is easy to see why early Christian architects incorporated the symbolism of this journey into their building designs. In fact, they defined the main congregation seating area as the "Nave", which is from the Latin root word "Navis" and shared by terms like "Naval" and "Navigate". They understood that the members of the church should function like the crew of a ship navigating towards the Kingdom of Heaven. Traditionally, the Nave faced the Chancel which in turn faced the rising sun. Most Christians at the time understood "eastward" to be facing Jerusalem and the Cross. The sun would rise behind the stained glass of the chancel, casting a heavenly light and creating another-worldly experience for medieval Christians. All of this reinforced the idea of a journey to the Kingdom of Heaven. In modern times we have many different perspectives on buildings and how they relate to our faith. Jerusalem is not always due east, but following Christ with the aim of serving God's Kingdom is still the central message.

The most successful church building projects are those which support a vibrant congregation that is "all onboard," focused on the ultimate goal of serving God. In this respect buildings are always secondary to the Gospel mission. In modern church construction even affluent churches are often faced with limited budgets and have to make choices between funding one building project over another. Hopefully these decisions are made with the ultimate mission in mind, whether that involves something as momentous as a new sanctuary

for expanded worship, or as simple as a coffee bar to attract young people. It could even be a project that speaks to what kind of people we are, such as a handicap ramp to accommodate the more physically challenged among us.

Many times we feel like we have failed as a church when we can't raise the [sic] all the funds for a visionary building plan in one capital campaign. We would do well to look at some of these older churches and realize that most of them were built in phases over multiple generations. Some of the larger cathedrals took hundreds of years to complete. The mason who laid the cornerstone might be the great, great, grandfather of the mason who laid the capstone. The original planners understood that they might not see completion of the master plan in their lifetimes. Likely, a very different congregation inhabited the building at its completion, and in this way, we are always building for the church of the future.

Peter had the faith to step out of the boat, but he could not make it the full distance to Jesus. However, the beautiful thing about this story is that Jesus met Peter half-way and completed his mission. Jesus said that he would build his church on Saint Peter "the rock" and while he didn't mean a physical church building, I think we should remember Peter's faith. When we build, we step out in faith with the hope of meeting Christ. We tell a story with our building and we bring others along with us on this journey to the Kingdom of Heaven.